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ABSTRACT

Perspectives on and methods in second language teaching have changed rapidly during the past 10 years. So also have the role and function of the language laboratory and the laboratory instructor. One area of concern, listening, has been somewhat neglected; generally it has been taught toward the end of increasing speaking proficiency. A review of instructional materials dating from 1902 through the audiolingual materials of the 1950's and 1960's supports the observation that listening has been taught, but as a means toward the acquisition of another skill. During the past 10 years, some listening research and materials development projects have been initiated. A review of these projects highlights conditions necessary for real comprehension to occur and for the skill to be acquired in the second language class. Some features of concern to theorists, materials developers, and teachers are: (1) the importance of extensive and focused listening; (2) attention to instructional formats tailored to different phases of learning; (3) focus on a content that conveys meaning, even in early stages; (4) emphasis on genuine language and interesting communication; (5) emphasis on problem-solving and active manipulation of information; (6) verification of comprehension; and (7) an emphasis on non-threatening learning procedures so as to insure maximal learning. (AMH)

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*Active Participation/Purposeful Listening in the Language Laboratory: Aspects of Theory and Practice**

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Second Language Instruction and the Language Laboratory: Past, Present, and Future

Directions in Second Language Instruction

During the ten years since the first Canadian Conference on Language Laboratories was held at Concordia University, perspectives on language learning and language teaching have changed in significant ways. Changing concepts about the nature of second language learning and learner processes have influenced language pedagogy and are beginning to be reflected in curriculum design and in the form and function of instructional materials.

Some of the features which characterize the wide-ranging "instructional revolution" in the second language field are the following (Morley, 1979):

- a focus on learners as active creators in their learning process, not passive recipients
- a focus on the individuality of the learner
- a focus on the learner's language
- a focus on the special purpose language needs of particular groups of students

* *Active Participation/Purposeful Listening in the Language Laboratory* was given as a plenary address at the Concordia Colloquium on Language Laboratories.

- a focus on genuine communication
- a focus on a humanistic classroom
- a focus on teachers not just as drill-leaders and presenters of subject matter, but as managers of language learning experiences and facilitators of learning.

Teachers who assume a re-defined role, as described above, find themselves facing greatly expanded responsibilities and a whole array of challenges. These include curriculum design, and writing and/or adapting instructional materials, as well as effecting changes in patterns of classroom interaction.

Directions in Language Laboratory Instruction

In many quarters language laboratory specialists/teachers have not been idle during the recent years of instructional revolution in second language learning and teaching. A number of significant changes already have taken place in the form and in the function of laboratory methods and materials. Many more changes are in the planning stages as the dynamic concept of "language learning center" takes shape.

Experimental evidence indicates that language learning centers of the future can combine a comfortable humanistic atmosphere with an effective study facility, one which provides a variety of self-study, self-access programs and/or small-group guided study programs. Programs can be expanded to involve integrated aspects of listening, writing, reading, and speaking in different combinations. Many programs can be styled to allow students to learn in their own way, for their own purposes, and at their own pace with guidance and performance feedback always available from a teacher/facilitator.

Language learning center programming of the future will be capable of adapting to multi-faceted learning modes and study formats. Such specificity in programming can provide key instructional components of language learning programs, not just supplementary audio or video "aids". The development of innovative methods and materials will challenge the creativity of language laboratory specialists/teachers as they work with the almost unlimited potential of technological advances in today's electronic audio-visual society.

The Laboratory Specialist/Teacher: A Review of Roles and Responsibilities

Language laboratory specialists/teachers usually provide three important services for their language department(s).

Language Laboratory Specialists as Consumers of Instructional Materials

As consumers (or agents for teacher/ student consumers) language laboratory specialists are responsible for monitoring the instructional materials or "software" market in order to locate the latest and best in recorded materials available from publishers, schools, colleges, and universities. Their next step is previewing, selecting, and purchasing materials. Their final responsibility in this service area involves incorporating the new language laboratory material into the particular course curriculum and "packaging" it for the most efficient and effective student use. This may include advising teachers and students on matters of matching the new materials to the most useful study formats available: individualized or group instruction; broadcast or listening-library format; lab-study; and whatever other options the available facilities and personal pedagogical philosophies dictate.

Language laboratory specialists as "facilitators" of language laboratory learning

As "facilitators", language laboratory specialists are responsible for monitoring the electronic equipment or "hardware" market in order to locate the latest and best in playback and recording machinery, duplicating machinery, and related electronic equipment. Cost must be measured against acoustic and visual quality, durability, and adaptability in facilitating language learning. In addition to locating and purchasing new equipment, language laboratory facilitator services include: (1) maintenance of delivery systems, recording equipment, and duplicating equipment for optimal performance, (2) providing duplicating services, precise cataloging and efficient storage of audio and video programs for easiest retrieval, (3) providing and updating descriptive inventories of programs for teacher and student use, (4) scheduling classes, recording sessions, and duplicating services, (5) supervising language laboratory teaching personnel and service personnel, and (6) a wide variety of related administrative duties.

Language laboratory specialists as producers of instructional materials

Language laboratory specialists often are charged with preparing new instructional materials. It is imperative that these be sensitive to students' needs and that they be based upon pedagogical decisions which follow sound theoretical principles and proven classroom/laboratory practices. This third responsibility of language laboratory specialists/teachers is their most important function in relation to their potential for impact on the language learning/language teaching field in the coming decade.

The Laboratory Specialist/Teacher: A Unique Role for the Future in Materials Development

The third responsibility of the language laboratory specialist/teacher, as described above, is that of producing laboratory instructional materials. Laboratory teachers who choose to specialize in researching and developing laboratory learning materials are in the potentially unique position of being able to combine three elements of expertise:

- knowledge about second language learning theory
- knowledge about second language learning pedagogy
- knowledge about the unique adaptive capabilities of electronic audio-visual technology to language learning programming.

The challenge is a big one, but the potential for impact on the second language field is a far-reaching one. IF a language laboratory specialist becomes A SERIOUS STUDENT OF SECOND LANGUAGE THEORY and the principles according to which pedagogical decisions must be made, IF a language laboratory specialist becomes A SERIOUS STUDENT OF SECOND LANGUAGE PEDAGOGY and experimental research on effective classroom and classroom/laboratory practices, and IF a language laboratory specialist becomes A SERIOUS STUDENT OF AUDIO-VISUAL TECHNOLOGY and experimental research on its application to effective language learning programming, then that language laboratory specialist is in a very strong position to make a powerful contribution to the second language field in the years ahead. In view of the audio-visual computer-assisted society in which we are living, laboratory learning specialists/teachers

have an opportunity to be strong professional leaders in the language fields as they apply their theoretical, pedagogical, and technological expertise to language learning programming.

Listening – The Neglected Skill in Second Language Instruction

Listening, A Critical Language Skill but Historically a Victim of Neglect in Language Classrooms

It is well-documented that listening is the single most frequently used skill in our daily language use. Although skill-use studies vary slightly, in general they agree that the percentages of communicative time are distributed as follows: around 50% listening, around 25% speaking, around 15% reading, and around 10% writing. In his book *Human Listening, Processes and Behaviors*, Weaver comments on these percentages of distribution:

> ... For several centuries we have devoted our study and teaching to the expressive part of the communicative process, which we use only about half as much as we use the receptive skills.

Weaver (1972) also comments on the elusiveness of our listening awareness:

> Most people are unaware of the proportion of time they spend in listening. After all, listening is neither so dramatic nor so noisy as talking. The talker is the center of attention for all listeners. His behavior is overt and vocal, and he hears and notices his own behavior, whereas listening activity often seems like merely being there – doing nothing. Thus we are likely to remember how much of the time we talk but forget how much we listen.

Morley (1972) has noted our tendency to take listening for granted:

> Perhaps an assumption that listening is a reflex, a little like breathing (listening seldom receives overt teaching attention in one's native language) has masked the importance and complexity of listening with understanding in a non-native language.

It is something of a paradox, given that listening is the single most used language skill, that very few instructional materials can be found which are written specifically to help learners to develop listening skill in a second language. Teachers can choose from hundreds of second language texts devoted to grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, speaking, reading, and writing but can find only a handful of texts devoted to listening skill-building. In fact until the last decade there was virtually no attention directed toward providing learners with listening experiences explicitly designed to help them to increase their proficiency in aural comprehension.

Six Factors which may have Contributed to the Neglect of Listening

The reasons for the "benign neglect" of the listening skill area in second language instruction are by no means clear. Some factors which may have influenced the language teaching field in this regard are the following:

Intense concentration on "speaking" a language

During the past forty to fifty years of modern language instruction the concentration has been on the end-product of oral production. Under the strong influence of audio-lingualism, the primary focus has been on teaching learners to *speak* the second language.[1]

Listening used as a MEANS to teach speaking but not taught as an END in itself[2]

The use of listening as a *means* to teach other aspects of language, namely speaking, may have obscured the fact that *listening itself* was not "taught". Traditional books are full of terminology which "gives the impression" that they are addressed to listening, when in fact the desired end-product is speaking proficiency, not listening proficiency, specifically the "mastery" of oral grammar and the "mastery" of pronunciation. The terms audio-lingual, aural-oral method, mim-mem (mimicry-memorization), aural grammar, and oral communication, all give the illusion of teaching "listening". In actuality, any improvement in the skill of listening comprehension was purely by chance, not by the design of the instructional materials.

The use of listening as a means to teach other aspects of language is not necessarily a "bad" goal, so long as it is clearly understood which is the *means* and which is the *end-product*.

What must be recognized and clarified is the difference between listening as a *tool* and listening as the *end-product*, that is, instructional protocol designed to assist students toward achieving skill in the effective processing of auditory data in a second language.

(*Note:* In a later section of this paper a two-value definition is suggested for the term "listening" whenever it is applied to listening-related activities of any kind in second language instruction.)

The false assumption that listening is a PASSIVE skill

Listening, along with reading, traditionally has been assumed to be a "passive" skill. NOTHING IS FURTHER FROM THE TRUTH. As Postovsky (1977) has noted:

> Listening is not a passive skill; it requires full participation and the undivided attention of the learner. And when the nature of the skill is understood, the process becomes exciting.

The problem of listener awareness comes into play here and, again, as Weaver (1972) observed, "listening activity often seems like merely being there – doing nothing" and as Morley (1972) noted, "perhaps an assumption that listening is a reflex, a little like breathing, has masked the importance and complexity of listening".

The absence of a model from first language teaching (as listening is seldom taught in first language instruction)

We seldom teach listening classes in first language and perhaps by analogy, we have assumed that it was not necessary to teach listening in a second language. In any case, we have few ready instructional procedures which we can transfer from the first language classroom to the second language classroom. Traditional language arts programs give only a little overt attention to listening throughout the entire spectrum from kindergarten through secondary school. A notable exception, of course, is the study of phonics and sound/symbol correspondences. However, in phonics instruction, notice that listening is

used as the tool, while the end-product is the facilitating of reading and writing skills, not the development of listening comprehension skills.

As noted previously, because listening is given little overt attention, perhaps we assume listening to be vaguely like a reflex, something we are born doing – or develop so easily that it needs no special attention. Perhaps, by analogy, we have assumed that "adequate" listening in a second language will develop by itself. This may be a "half-truth"; obviously, second language learners *do* develop "some" skill in listening. However, the following questions suggest themselves:

(1) *Is* the listening skill which second language learners develop "adequate"?
(2) For what purposes is it "adequate"?
(3) Is it marked by superficial "coping" strategies?
(4) If provided with guided instructional materials designed to assist them in developing strategies for processing aural data, might not students develop listening skill which is MORE than "adequate"?
(5) Given assistance, might not students develop listening strategies at a more comprehensive hierarchial level rather than "coping" strategies which appear to focus on a linear surface structure level?
(6) With a supportive listening program, might not there be less psychological trauma to students who so often seem to be "on the defensive" as they fend off a deluge of largely meaningless sound with reactions which are clearly detrimental to concentration and effective comprehension.[1]

The fact that how we listen and comprehend language remain largely a mystery

As Sittler commented in the introduction to a special publication compiled as preparation for the participants in a special "Seminar on Language Learning via Listening" held during the fourth AILA Congress in Stuttgart in August 1975:

> The primacy of hearing in the language learning process has never been thoroughly investigated or scientifically tested.

Some progress has been made since 1975 and slowly research is beginning to contribute to our knowledge about human auditory-cognitive processing systems and auditory-cognitive strategies. However, a few answers seem only to generate even more questions.

(1) Is auditory perception in a second language ever "the same" as one's auditory perception in one's first language?
(2) What are the components which make aural comprehension so easy in a first language and so often difficult in one's second language?
(3) Is "comprehension" in a second language like "comprehension" in a first language?
(4) Does a motor theory of phonetics contribute explanatory power?

The overwhelming complexity of the components of the "listening act" may have discouraged research and materials development

Perhaps the difficulties of attacking the many problems of this high-level aural-cognitive skill, of breaking it down into components for manageable classroom and laboratory presentation have interfered with the development of instructional materials. This may be especially true, inasmuch as we have no existing model readily available from first language teaching.

To review, then, although the reasons for the neglect of listening skill-building in the second language field are not clear, the six factors cited above may have played a role: (1) our intense concentration on "speaking" a language, (2) our false assumption that listening is a PASSIVE skill, (4) the absence of a model from first language teaching (as listening is seldom taught in first language instruction), (5) the fact that how we listen and comprehend language remain largely a mystery, and (6) the overwhelming complexity of the components of the "listening act" may have discouraged research and materials development.

LISTENING AS A MEANS TO ANOTHER END versus LISTENING AS AN END IN ITSELF: Clarification and exemplification

As noted earlier in this paper, until the last decade there was very little seriously principled instructional material available which

was explicitly designed to provide learners with guided listening experiences toward skill-building in aural comprehension.

Relating to the title of this paper, *active participation/purposeful listening*, one might now ask the question, "Over the past forty to fifty years haven't we been providing language learners with classroom and language laboratory experiences in which there has been active participation and purposeful listening?" And the answer is, "Yes, indeed." Certainly as far as recorded material is concerned, active participation and purposeful listening were integral parts of the Henry Higgins – Eliza Doolittle instruction. Notice, however, that the *purposeful listening* was as a means to another end, that is, *proficiency in speaking*, not proficiency in listening. In more modern times, in both classroom and laboratory, certainly "pattern practice", as exemplified by the Lado/Fries text titled *English Pattern Practices*, stressed active participation and purposeful listening. Notice again, however, that the *active participation* and the *purposeful listening* were as a means to another end, that is *proficiency in spoken grammar*, not proficiency in listening.

The critical need here is to recognize and to clarify the differences between (a) listening used to enhance proficiency in another language area and (b) listening used to enhance proficiency in the listening skill area itself. It seems useful at this point to suggest a two-value definition for the term "listening" whenever it is applied to listening-related activities of any kind in second language instruction. One value can be defined as LISTENING AS A MEANS TO ANOTHER END; usually as a means to improve speaking proficiency, less often as a means to improve reading or writing proficiency. The other value can be defined as LISTENING AS AN END IN ITSELF; that is, listening activities designed to improve students' listening proficiency, or facets thereof.

In continuing research and materials development in listening, this two-value concept for the term LISTENING can aid us in formulating explicit characterizations of the many facets of "active participation" and "purposeful listening". It can guide us in developing instructional materials which sometimes may separate the two values of listening and sometimes may combine them. It can provide us with guidelines in making principled pedagogical decisions in the evaluation, adaptation, and/or development of second language learning materials.

Examples of LISTENING AS A MEANS TO ANOTHER END

An early example of LISTENING AS A MEANS TO ANOTHER END is one which dates back to the year 1902. One can suppose that it is similar to the kind of recorded lesson which George Bernard Shaw described in Pygmalion and which, in turn, has been enjoyed world-wide in performances of *My Fair Lady*. Example number one is a French lesson designed to improve the student's pronunciation of a list of French words, phrases, and sentences (French Lesson Series, *International Correspondence Schools*). The student had two items: a black cylinder recording to be played on an Edison windup cylinder player with amplification provided by the brass horn attached to the sleeve which contained the needle and a worksheet which contained brief instructions, the list of words, phrases, and sentences, and a translation for each of the items on the list. The student was instructed to listen and to repeat as each item was given by the modes.

Another more recent example of material which employed LISTENING AS A MEANS TO ANOTHER END comes from the English text *English Pattern Practices* (1953; 1957; 1958) by Robert Lado and Charles Fries. A sample from this text is shown below in Example # 2. In the introduction of this text Robert Lado establishes the following purpose for the text and its taped laboratory materials:

> This newest revision of our "Pattern Practice Materials" as we often call them, completes the series of thirty-four units from our *Intensive Course in English*. We offer them with confidence in their extraordinary effectiveness. They represent a new theory of language learning, the idea that TO LEARN A NEW LANGUAGE ONE MUST ESTABLISH ORALLY THE PATTERNS OF THE LANGUAGE AS SUBCONSCIOUS HABITS. These oral practices are directed specifically to that end.
>
> In PATTERN PRACTICE as developed at the English Language Institute and as embodied in these lessons, the student is led to practice a pattern, changing some element of that pattern each time, so that normally he never repeats the same sentence twice. Furthermore, his attention is drawn to the changes, which are stimulated by pictures, oral substitutions, etc., and thus

EXAMPLE #1:
LISTENING AS A MEANS FOR MASTERING PRONUNCIATION

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL
Scranton, Pennyslvania ICS Incorporated
1902 (copyright)
National Textbook Co.

French Lesson Number 14

Directions: Listen to each word or phrase. Repeat it, imitating it as closely as possible. Read the French word or phrase and its English translation.

French	*English*	
aller	to go	
je vais	I go	I am going
il va	he goes	he is going
nous allons	we go	we are going
ils vont	they go	they are going
j'irai	I will go	I am going
arriver	to arrive	
la division	division	
entrer	to enter	
il faut	it is necessary; you must	
il a parlé	he spoke	
il faudra	it will be necessary; you must	
une fois	once	
mourrir	to die	
je meurs	I die	I am dying
nous mourons	we die	we are dying
ils meurent	they die	they are dying
mort	dead	died
je mourai	I will die	I am going to die

EXAMPLE #2:
LISTENING AS A MEANS FOR MASTERING ORAL GRAMMAR

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
Ann Arbor, Michigan
1941; 1953; 1957; 1958 (copyrights)
(The University of Michigan Press)

Robert Lado
Charles C. Fries
and the Staff of the
English Language Institute

English Pattern Practices:
Establishing the Patterns as Habits

Lesson I

1. Statements, questions, and answers with IS, ARE, AM (forms of BE).
2. Plural contrasted with singular.

1. Statements, questions, and answers with IS, ARE, AM (forms of BE).

Practice 1. Chart I. This Practice introduces the chart.

Classwork: Open Chart I. Chart I is at the back of the book. Close the book. The chart is now at the right of the book. Repeat the statements after the teacher. Associate the statements with the pictures on the chart.

1. It's a comb.	[ɪts ə kom]
2. It's a watch.	[ɪts ə wač]
3. It's a key.	[ɪts ə ki]
4. It's a pencil.	[ɪts ə pɛnsəl]
5. It's a toothbrush.	[ɪts ə túθbrəš]
6. It's a fork.	[ɪts ə fɔrk]
7. It's an apple.	[ɪts ən ǽpəl]
8. It's an iron.	[ɪts ən airn]

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE TEACHER: The teacher should give at least three examples for each Practice. In giving the examples the teacher gives both the teacher's and the student's part, reading from left to right across the page, but indicates with words or gestures which part is for the teacher and which is for the student.

Textbook: Each student has a copy of the text.
The charts are pull-out pages at the back of the text.
Wall Charts: Large wall charts are available for classroom use.
Tapes: Tapes of the lessons are available for laboratory use.

> the PATTERN ITSELF, THE SIGNIFICANT FRAMEWORK OF THE SENTENCE, rather than the particular sentence, is driven intensively into his habit reflexes.

In these two examples listening was a part of exercises designed to assist students either toward "improved pronunciation", as in the case of Example #1, or toward "making grammatical patterns automatic habits", as in the case of Example #2. In both instances students were "actively involved" in certain ways and the listening was "purposeful" as defined by each kind of exercise. The LISTENING aspect of the exercise activity was used as a MEANS TO ANOTHER END. These two kinds of exercises are representative of the kinds of materials widely used during the 1940s and 1950s, less widely used during the 1960s and 1970s, but continuing to be used today in some programs in some parts of the world.

Examples of LISTENING AS AN END IN ITSELF

Seriously principled instructional materials designed to enhance the skill of listening, as itself the end-product, are not to be found before the period of the late 1960s and early 1970s. During that span of time, along with a number of other changes in aspects of theory and practice in the second language field, a handful of language teachers/researchers in different locations began to shape instructional materials specifically for listening skill-building.

In 1975 Karl Diller discussed three individual listening projects which had resulted in sets of instructional materials for listening skill-building. In an article titled *Some Trends for Applied Linguistics and Foreign Language Teaching*, he commented on the projects of Asher, Winitz and Reeds, and Morley.

James Asher (1969, 1974) developed a system called TPR or "Total Physical Response". Diller comments:

> James Asher's "Total Physical Response" ... stresses listening comprehension. In the first semester 70% of the student's time is spent listening, 20% speaking, and 10% reading and writing. The distinctive characteristic of this method is that every utterance by the teacher is a command or is embedded in a command

> which the students then act on. They start out with "Stand up!" and "Sit down!" but Asher shows how complex these commands can be by giving this example: "Gregory, find the picture of the beautiful woman with green eyes, long black hair and wearing a sun hat that has red stripes. When you find the picture, show it to the class and describe the woman!" (Asher et al., 1974:27). Asher's evidence shows that this is a very effective method indeed, requiring fewer class hours and no homework to outstrip the average college language student on standardized tests.

Harris Winitz and James Reeds (1973, 1975) developed a system which is called "Rapid Acquisition of a Foreign Language by the Avoidance of Speaking". Diller comments:

> ...in a system developed by Winitz and Reeds (1973), the students are silent and the teacher (or tape recorder) talks 100% of the time. ...the learner's only overt behavior is his choosing of the one picture in a quadrant of four which corresponds to the meaning of each utterance. Actually, for the first utterance there is only one picture, a pencil, and three blank spaces, as the voice says "bleistift." But after that there always is a contrast. This technique apparently succeeds in teaching vocabulary at a much faster rate than usual – some fifty words an hour. After the basic grammar and vocabulary are learned, the students are allowed to begin speaking. By postponing pronunciation for so long, it is claimed that the result is much more native-like speech. But up to that point, this method is the most meaningful refutation of the behaviorist maxim that a language is a set of speech habits. Here are students learning language without acquiring any speech habits at all.

Joan Morley (1972, 1973) developed a series of listening comprehension lessons which stress early and extensive listening and require an immediate written response. Students are involved in listening approximately 70% of the time and in reading and writing approximately 30% of the time. The lessons feature a double listening-task structure in which dictated material is followed by problem-solving directives. The problem-solving aspect of each lesson involves some manner of manipulating the aurally presented material in carefully specified ways. The units/lessons are structured around notional

dimensions of spacial, temporal, numerical, etc. concepts. Diller comments:

> At a more advanced level, Joan Morley has developed a book for *Improving Aural Comprehension* (1972) in English as a Second Language using meaningful material, but unlike Winitz and Reeds, the responses are in writing and require a certain amount of reading. It is the lack of reading which bothers me most about Winitz and Reeds' experiment, for many adults are helped tremendously by the written word.

A sample of a lesson from a Winitz and Reeds language learning text and a sample of a lesson from a Morley language learning text are presented as examples of LISTENING AS AN END IN ITSELF.

Example number one is from the Winitz and Reeds series *Natural Language Learning* (English version). The following comments are excerpts from the *Instructions* page at the beginning of the text:

> Comprehension means knowing what people say as they talk of objects and events in their environment. Only recently have research scientists in the psychology of language discovered the crucial role played by comprehension training in second language learning. This program teaches understanding of language. Your speaking skills will develop as you learn to understand.
>
> You will not need to memorize anything. You need only to listen and relate what you hear to what you see. You will learn the language in almost the same way a young child learns his first language.
>
> Using this book is simple. You will hear each word or phrase from the accompanying cassette twice. Listen carefully, BUT DO NOT REPEAT THE WORD OF SENTENCE. ONLY LISTEN. Then mark an "x" with the felt marker provided next to the square X below the corresponding picture. Now turn the page and you will see a printed "x" next to the correct answer.
>
> Remember, do not repeat items aloud. Simply listen and mark. If you follow these instructions you will perform correctly almost every time.

EXAMPLE #1:
LISTENING AS A MEANS TO DEVELOP LISTENING COMPREHENSION

GENERAL LINGUISTICS CORPORATION
Kansas City, Missouri
1975 (copyright)

Harris Winitz
James A. Reeds
Paul A. Garcia

Natural Language Learning (English)
Volume 3 – Lesson 5

Directions: (repeated)
Using this book is simple. You will hear each word or phrase from the accompanying cassette twice. Listen carefully. BUT DO NOT REPEAT THE WORD OR SENTENCE. ONLY LISTEN. Then mark an "x" with the felt marker provided next to the square X below the corresponding picture. Now turn the page and you will see a printed "x" next to the correct answer.

Remember, do not repeat items aloud. Simply listen and mark.

Workbook Frame #24:

A picture of a book.	A picture of the teacher walking.	A picture of the judge sleeping.
X	X	X

Tape Script: Twenty-four. The teacher is walking. (short pause)
The teacher is walking. (longer pause)

Workbook Frame #25:

A picture of a cat.	A picture of the king walking.	A picture of the head and shoulders of the king.
X	X	X

Tape Script: Twenty-five.

The king is walking. (short pause)
The king is walking. (longer pause)
The teacher is walking. (short pause)
the teacher is walking. (longer pause)

EXAMPLE #2:
LISTENING AS A MEANS TO DEVELOP LISTENING COMPREHENSION

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN — Joan Morley
Ann Arbor, Michigan
1972 (1973)
(The University of Michigan Press)

Improving Aural Comprehension
Unit 3 – Lesson 19

Directions in the Student's Book:
Listen carefully. First practice the vocabulary. Then listen to each statement. Find the correct square. Write the correct word from the list below.

Instruction in the Teacher's Book:
This is a difficult lesson. It is a test of memory, logic and spatial relationships. Students must concentrate very hard. Read slowly and repeat as is necessary. Give adequate writing time.

Tapes: (A recording of everything in both student workbook and teacher book of readings.)

Workbook Page 137:

SPACE PUZZLE: WHO PLAYS THE GUITAR?

Five students from five different countries were studying English in the United States. They lived in adjoining houses. They planned to study in five different cities. Each of the five had a different hobby.

	Red House	Blue House	Green House	White House	Purple House
Country					
Field					
City					
Hobby					

Country	**City**	**Field**	**Hobby**
Turkey	San Francisco	Engineering	Dancing
Peru	Miami	Law	soccer
Korea	Chicago	Business	swimming
Spain	New York	Chemistry	travel
India	Boston	Psychology	playing the guitar

Teacher's Book Page 76:

1. The student from the country of Turkey lives in the middle house.
   Write *Turkey* in the correct square.
2. The student in the field of Engineering lives on the far right.
   Write *Engineering* in the correct square.
3. The student who's going to New York to study lives next to the red house.

(continue....).

Example #2 is from the Morley text *Improving Aural Comprehension* (1972; 1973). In the introduction to the *Teacher's Book of Readings* the following comments are made:

> One emphasis of the workbook is on factual listening. A second emphasis is on abstract relationships and organizational methods. This double emphasis is accomplished by the double listening-task structure of each lesson. The first task is *writing from dictation.* The second task is *listening to oral questions or problems and making up answers* from the dictated information. Sometimes the answers involve only simple copying. More often the answers involve manipulating some of the dictated data in some way. Students check their own answers after the dictation and again after answering the questions so they have immediate feedback about their progress.
>
> Students were instrumental in developing the dual organization of the workbook: each unit is planned around a *concept area* while individual lessons also are planned around one of 15 *content area* threads which run throughout. It is the deliberate intent of the lessons to actually give the students opportunities to learn new information (as well as to "review" some *in English*) as they practice listening.

Listening Approaches to Language Learning: Research Projects by Sittler and Postovsky

Two listening research/materials development projects of the seventies, those of Sittler and Postovsky, featured listening approaches to language learning.

Working at the University of Giesen in Germany, Edward Sittler (1975) developed an elaborate listening-learning program for German speakers learning English which was called "Audio-Immersion: A New Approach to Language Acquisition".

Working at the Defense Language Institute, West Coast Branch, Presidio of Monterey, California, Valerian Postovsky (1974) developed a listening comprehension program for English speakers learning Russian. This program featured an initial listening/writing phase of instruction with an explicit "Delay in Oral Practice at the Beginning of Second Language Learning". More recent important contributions

to the area of listening approaches to language learning have been made by Nord (1975), Gary (1975; 1981) and Parent (1976). Postovsky's rationale is as follows:

> Is "learning by doing" an efficient way to learn a foreign language? The answer to this question is *yes*, provided we have a clear notion of what "doing" is in different phases of the language learning process. In the initial phase of learning, I suggest "doing" is developing an auditory receptive ability to comprehend the spoken language. At this stage the learner develops some covert processing strategies to transform foreign auditory input into meaning. The process serves to imprint the integrated structure of language in human memory on the level of recognition. When new linguistic patterns have been thus perceived, frequent reactivation of these patterns on the recognition level will make them more and more retrievable, and as linguistic features of a foreign language become retrievable, spontaneous vocal responses follow. At this stage of development the learner is ready for oral practice, and the proposition that "one learns to speak a foreign language by speaking it" makes sense (Postovsky, 1977).

In developing instructional materials for listening skill-building the following considerations as set down by Postovsky (1977) are of *vital importance:*

> We must remember, however, that mere exposure of students to the sounds of a foreign language is not sufficient. A successful aural comprehension course must satisfy at least three essential conditions:
>
> 1) the language material presented to the students must convey meaning from the first hour of instruction;
> 2) a provision must be made for a student response which will verify comprehension of each utterance or a short passage immediately after delivery;
> 3) students must be challenged to problem-solve and to guess at the meaning of unfamiliar elements in a foreign utterance on the basis of context and other cues in the given linguistic environment.

Note his key concept again is that MERE EXPOSURE OF STUDENTS TO THE SOUNDS OF A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IS NOT SUFFICIENT.

Relating Listening Research and Materials Development to Second Language Theory

In the work of researching and preparing principled instructional materials for listening skill-building in the years ahead, it is important to continually relate our work to aspects of theory and practice as reported by scholars in the second language field. In this section of the paper some aspects of recent reports by Burt and Dulay, Krashen, and Widdowson and Brumfit will be summarized and related to listening research and materials development.

Second Language Learning: Burt and Dulay, 1981

In a 1981 paper titled *Optimal Language Learning Environments* (1981) Burt and Dulay report on their survey of recent second language research and the four major conclusions which they have drawn from relevant studies.

The first of their conclusions is that *a natural language environment is necessary for optimal language acquisition.* Such an environment is described as existing "wnenever the focus of the speakers is on the content of the communication rather than on the language itself." In relating this to the area of listening skill-building we might define "speaker" as "speaker-listener" at one and the same time.

The second condition for an optimal language learning environment, as reported by Burt and Dulay, is that *communicative interactions must match the learner's level of language development.* These learner levels and communicative interactions are important in relation to the previously discussed work of Asher, Winitz and Reeds, Morley, and Postovsky. Burt and Dulay postulate that:

> When learning a new language, learners appear to pass through at least three kinds of communication phases: *one-way, partial two-way, and full two-way.*

They characterize *one-way communication* as taking place when a learner is listening to or reading in a second language with the

communication targeted *toward* the learner but *not issuing from* the learner. They comment that:

> Listening to speeches and radio programs, watching films and most television programs, and reading books and magazines are examples of one-way communication.

Obviously auditory and video materials in a learning laboratory center, supplemented perhaps by some written materials, are ideal for instructional one-way communication experiences. Notice, however, if indeed they are to qualify as *instructional* one-way communication experiences it is important to heed Postovsky's precautionary comment that *mere exposure of students to the sounds of a foreign language is not sufficient.* If such experiences are to be truly "instructional experiences" and not just "exposure experiences" as is our teacher mandate as "facilitators of learning", (as noted in the first section of this paper), Postovsky's essential conditions for aural comprehension programming are important to consider again. They are (1) the necessity for the language material to *convey meaning* from the very first hour of instruction, (2) the necessity to provide for *a student response which will verify comprehension* immediately after the delivery of each utterance or short passage, and (3) the necessity to *challenge students to problem-solve and guess at the meaning* of unfamiliar elements on the basis of context and other cues in the given linguistic environment, and in the case of video, in the para-linguistic environment as well.

Burt and Dulay describe *partial two-way communication* as taking place when communication is directed toward the learner and a response issues from the learner but the response is either *non-verbal*, such as a nod or a physical response, or is *in the learner's native language*, but not the target language. It is easy to identify some of the materials of Asher, Winitz and Reeds, Morley, and Postovsky as instructional partial two-way communication experiences.

Finally, *full two-way communication* as identified by Burt and Dulay involves the learner in speaking in the target language and both sending and receiving verbal messages. In relating this to listening research and materials development we might broaden the description to read "speaking/writing" in the target language and "verbal/written" messages.

The conclusions which these authors draw relative to this condition for optimal language learning environment are (1) "that learners appear to tend toward these types of communication at different times in the learning process", and (2) "that apparently matching the type of communicative interaction with the learners' level of language development maximizes the students' likelihood for success."

The third feature reported by Burt and Dulay as important to optimal language learning environments is that *target language input must be comprehensible to the learner.* The concrete referents in the form of visual aids and motor activities and the "here-and-now" kinds of extra-linguistic support which they suggest remind us again of the listening materials discussed in earlier sections of this paper.

Burt and Dulay report a fourth conclusion, that the source of the language which the learner hears influences the learners' performance, that learners attend selectively to different speaker models, and learn from some and not from others. That is, *language learners attend to, and acquire, the language and dialect spoken by people with whom they identify.*

Second Language Learning: Krashen, 1981

In a 1981 paper titled, *Effective Second Language Acquisition: Insights from Research,* Krashen summarizes several current theoretical hypotheses in second language acquisition research and follows with a discussion of their implications for teaching methods and materials. The five hypotheses are as follows:

a) *The Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis* (noted as "perhaps the most fundamental") which proposes that there is a difference between *subconsciously acquiring* a language and *consciously learning* a language; that *acquiring* is "picking up a language" as children do in a first language and that there is a "language acquisition device" or LAD which does *not* disappear at puberty; that *learning* a language is "formal knowledge" or "knowing about" language.

b) *The Natural Order Hypothesis* which proposes that grammatical items are acquired in a predictable order; that some forms tend to be acquired early and some late; that there are predictable "transistional" or intermediate stages which are marked by predictable "errors".

c) *The Monitor Hypothesis* which shows the interrelationship between acquisition and learning; it proposes that our fluency in second language performance is due to what we have acquired, not what we have learned; that conscious grammar knowledge is available only as a Monitor, or editor.

d) *The Input Hypothesis* which proposes that in language acquisition we first "go for meaning" and acquire structure as a result of understanding the message, the opposite of some language teaching which assumes that students should first master forms and then "learn how to use them"; that it is a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for language acquisition that the person *understand*, via hearing or reading, input language that contains structure "a bit beyond" the acquirer's current level of competence; that we need not teach speaking directly, but rather that speech "emerges" after the acquirer has built up sufficient competence via input.

e) *The Affective Filter Hypothesis* which proposes that the effect of affect is not directly on the LAD, or Language Acquisition Device, but rather, that affective variables may act to block input from the LAD; that acquirers acquire at different rates depending on the strength of the Affective Filter according to personality, the relationship between the acquirer and the source of the input, and on the acquisition situation; that Filter strength increases markedly after puberty, but that teachers can do a great deal to keep the adult student's Filter as low as possible.

Krashen continues with the comment that the most important "implication" of these hypotheses is that acquisition is central and that our pedagogical programs in the second language field should focus on supplying students with input which encourages acquisition and on helping the students to get input outside of the classroom.

He characterizes optimal input as follows:

- it is comprehensible;
- it is interesting and/or relevant to the student; (Krashen notes that only genuinely "communicative" activities will strike "deep" enough, and that traditionally styled "meaningful" drills and exercises are not sufficient.)

- it is not grammatically sequenced; (Krashen notes that grammatical sequencing is not only unnecessary, but undesirable when the goal is acquisition and not learning.)
- it is supplied in *great* quantities; (Krashen notes that the approaches of Asher and of Terrell very likely owe much of their success to the fact that they provide an input-rich classroom for the entire class period.)
- input should be presented in such a way that it will not encourage a strong Affective Filter and, in Stevick's terms, "put the student on the defensive";
- input should give beginning and intermediate students tools which will enable them to obtain additional input outside of the classroom.

Krashen concludes by noting that according to current theory, language acquisition occurs when we are not focussed on language, per se, but when we are engaged in using language, that is when we are concentrated on understanding a spoken or written message. He sees the job of teachers as being "to help students acquire, to provide them with comprehensible input they cannot get from the outside world, and to help them to develop to the point where they can improve without us". He calls this "our primary responsibility".

Again, in the work of preparing principled materials specifically for listening skill-building, there is much of interest and of relevance in the hypotheses summarized by Krashen and their implications for teaching methods and materials.

Second Language Teaching: Widdowson and Brumfit, 1981

In a 1981 paper titled, *Issues in Second Language Syllabus Design*, Widdowson and Brumfit draw attention to a number of the issues involved. They begin their paper with the following insightful perspective:

> This paper exploits a tension between principles and practice. On the one hand, syllabus design must be subject to careful discussion and investigation; on the other, particular syllabuses are designed to cope with real contingencies which impose practical constraints and call for immediate solutions. On the one hand, advance will only be possible if we are prepared to speculate, to think divergently, to question tradition; on the other,

> syllabuses must relate to real people, students and teachers, who cannot be subjected to controlled experimentation, and who cannot be treated as the passive recipients of speculation from above. As theorists we may need to withdraw from involvement to achieve a perspective from a detached vantage point, but as educators we cannot avoid responsibility to the world of practical pedagogic affairs to which we must ultimately be accountable.

This is a philosophy well worth a second reading and a second thought as it relates to the subject of this paper, that is aspects of theory and practice in the development of instructional materials in listening skill-building.

Widdowson and Brumfit summarize their primary concerns about issues in second language syllabus design as follows:

> Structural syllabuses are based on formal linguistic categories. Criteria for moving from simple to complex are undefined. Possible alternatives include types of communicative syllabuses. But do such "communicative syllabuses" facilitate use any better than structural ones which are economical and involve no break with tradition? Neither type seems ideal. Possible improvements may be found by examining:
>
> 1. traditional pedagogic practices from a communicative perspective;
> 2. the value of fluency activities (a methodological solution);
> 3. attempts to "marry" functional and formal requirements, and most important;
> 4. the role of content.
>
> True communicative teaching may depend on our stressing language as a means to acquire knowledge, rather than as an end in itself.

As with Burt and Dulay and as with Krashen, the viewpoints of Widdowson and Brumfit are important ones to study in the research and materials development for the language laboratory learning centers of the future.

Convergences, Similarities, and Mutual Concerns

It is interesting to note some convergences on common focal points, some similarities in priority features of second language learning/second language teaching *among* theorists, *among* researchers/materials developers, and more importantly, *between* the two groups.

Observe the following features of mutual concern:

- the importance of language input, especially extensive listening;
- levels or phases of learning which have different characteristics requiring different instructional formats;
- a focus on content which conveys meaning (i.e., is comprehensible) from the very beginning;
- an emphasis on genuine language and genuinely interesting communication;
- problem-solving and active manipulation of information received;
- verification of comprehension, especially written or nonverbal;
- an emphasis on instructional experiences which are nonthreatening to learners so that learning is not blocked.

More and more listening appears to play a key role. It is interesting to recall Belasco's (1967) comment of nearly 15 years ago: "...the key to achieving proficiency in speaking is achieving proficiency in listening comprehension."

Conclusion

It has been the purpose of this paper to look at four areas relating to active participation/purposeful listening in the language laboratory: aspects of theory and practice. These have included:

1) Second Language Instruction and the Language Laboratory: Past, Present, and Future;

2) Listening – The Neglected Skill in Second Language Instruction;

3) LISTENING AS A MEANS TO ANOTHER END Versus LISTENING AS AN END IN ITSELF: Clarification and Exemplification;
4) Relating Listening Research and Materials Development to Second Language Theory.

Researching and developing instructional materials is a creative process and an exciting one. It is challenging, time-consuming, exacting, and often frustrating. There is a built-in need for experimental trial-and-error, and no matter how careful the planning, some developments do occur by chance. But the highest quality, most efficient, and most effective learning materials are seldom the product of chance. They are the product of design.

As design is translated into substance, it is a critical responsibility of the materials developer to maintain a continuous monitoring of issues relating to language learning and language teaching, to study the kinds of aspects of theory and practice outlined in sections 3 and 4 of this paper. As just noted, it is interesting to observe convergences on common focal points *among* theorists and *between* theorists and listening researchers and/or materials developers.

Again, in view of the audio-visual computer-assisted society in which we are living, laboratory learning specialists/teachers have an opportunity to be strong professional leaders in the language fields as they continue to study and to apply their theoretical, pedagogical, and technological expertise to language learning programming.

It is interesting to speculate that while listening was the neglected skill until the last decade or so, it may very well be the skill area of primary focus in the second language field during the decade ahead.

1. See Postovsky's (1977) comments on why, "premature emphasis on oral production tends to increase the complexity of the learning task and to cause some undesirable side effects."
2. Audio-lingual scholars certainly recognized the importance of listening, as the very name "audio-lingual" demonstrates. However, the term "listening" was applied to the need for understanding of a short speech segment (word, phrase, sentence) in order to produce it, first imitatively, then spontaneously, toward the goals of "mastering" oral grammar and pronunciation.
3. See Krashen's (1981) comments on the Affective Filter and the blocking of input from the Language Acquisition Device (LAD). See Stevick's (1976) comments on instruction which puts students "on the defensive".

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